58TH CONGRESS, 2d Session. } SENATE. { REPORT No. 1175.

ERECTION OF MONUMENT AT FORT RECOVERY, OHIO.

MARCH 1, 1904.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. FORAKER, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 2329.]

The Committee on Military Affairs have had under consideration the following bill:

For the erection of a memorial structure at Fort Recovery, Ohio.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to erect a suitable memorial structure on the grounds at Fort Recovery, Ohio, where lie buried the remains of General Richard Butler, six hundred and thirty American soldiers, and sixty-one officers, who, while under the command of General Saint Clair, were slaughtered by the Indians of the Northwest Territory at the battle of Fort Recovery, Ohio, on the morning of November fourth, seventeen hundred and ninety-one.

SEC. 2. That for the above purpose the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, or as much of said sum as may be necessary, be hereby appropriated, from any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated. This sum shall be expended by direction of the Secretary of War or such officers as he may designate: *Provided*, That the money hereby appropriated shall be drawn from time to time only as may be required during the progress of the work and under the requisition of the Secretary.

They report the same favorably, with an amendment.

On page 1, line 4, after the word "memorial," strike out the word "structure" and insert in lieu thereof the word "monument."

As amended it is recommended that the bill do pass.

The proposed legislation has for its purpose the suitable marking of the burial place of Gen. Richard Butler, 61 other officers, and about 630 American soldiers who were slaughtered by the Indians at Fort Recovery, Ohio, while under the command of Gen. Arthur St. Clair.

The battle occurred on November 4, 1791, but the killed were not buried until the following January, at which time a detachment of 150 Kentucky volunteers, under the command of Gen. James Wilkinson, was sent to perform that duty.

The following extracts from The Winning of the West (vol. 4) fully set forth the great disadvantage under which the Americans were compelled to conduct hostilities:

On November 3 the doomed army, now reduced to a total of about 1,400 men, camped on the eastern fork of the Wabash, high up, where it was but 20 yards wide.

There was snow on the ground and the little pools were skimmed with ice. The camp was on a narrow rise of ground where the troops were cramped together, the artillery and most of the horses in the middle. On both flanks, and along most of the rear, the ground was low and wet. All around the wintry woods lay in frozen silence. In front the militia were thrown across the creek, and nearly a quarter of a mile beyond the rest of the troops. Parties of Indians were seen during the afternoon, and they skulked around the lines at night, so that the sentinels frequently fired at them. * * *

On November 4 the men were under arms, as usual, by dawn, St. Clair intending to throw up entrenchments and then make a forced march in light order against the Indian towns. But he was forestalled. Soon after sunrise, just as the men were dismissed from parade, a sudden assault was made upon the militia, who lay unprotected beyond the creek. The unexpectedness and fury of the onset, the heavy firing, and the appalling whoops and yells of the throngs of painted savages threw the militia into disorder. After a few moments' resistance they broke and fled in wild panic to the camp of the regulars, among whom they drove in a frightened herd, spreading dismay and confusion.

The drums beat, and the troops sprang to arms as soon as they heard the heavy firing at the front; and their volleys for a moment checked the onrush of the plumed woodland warriors. But the check availed nothing. The braves filed off to one side and the other, completely surrounded the camp, killed or drove in the guards and pickets, and then advanced close to the main lines.

A furious battle followed. After the first onset the Indians fought in silence, no sound coming from them save the incessant rattle of their fire, as they crept from log to log, from tree to tree, ever closer and closer. The soldiers stood in close order, in the open; their musketry and artillery fire made a tremendous noise, but did little damage to a foe they could hardly see. Now and then, through the hanging smoke, terrible figures flitted, painted black and red, the feathers of the hawk and eagle braided in their long scalp-locks; but save for these glimpses the soldiers knew the presence of their somber enemy only from the fearful rapidity with which their comrades fell dead and wounded in the ranks. They never even knew the members or leaders of the Indians. * * * It is said that the chief who led them, both in council and in battle, was Little Turtle, the Miami. At any rate, there were present all the chiefs and picked warriors of the Delawares, Shawnees, Wyandots, and Miamis, and all the most reckless and adventurous young braves from among the Iroquois and the Indians of the Upper Lakes, as well as many of the ferocious whites and half-breeds who dwelt in the Indian villages.

The Indians fought with the utmost boldness and ferocity, and with the utmost skill and caution. Under cover of the smoke of a heavy but harmless fire from the army they came up so close that they shot the troops down as hunters slaughter a herd of standing buffalo. Watching their chance, they charged again and again with the tomahawk, gliding into close quarters, while their bewildered foes were still blindly firing into the smoke-shrouded woods. The men saw no enemy as they stood in the ranks to load and shoot. In a moment, without warning, dark faces frowned through the haze, the war axes gleamed, and on the frozen ground the weapons clattered as the soldiers fell. As the comrades of the fallen sprang forward to avenge them the lithe warriors vanished as rapidly as they had appeared, and once more the soldiers saw before them only the dim forest and shifting smoke wreaths, with vague half glimpse of the hidden foe, while the steady singing of the Indian bullets never ceased, and on every hand the bravest and steadiest fell one by one. * * *

Instead of being awed by the bellowing artillery the Indians made the gunners a special object of attack. Man after man was picked off until every officer was killed but one, who was wounded, and most of the privates also were slain or disabled. The artillery was thus almost silenced, and the Indians, emboldened by success, swarmed forward and seized the guns, while at the same time a part of the left wing of the army began to shrink back. But the Indians were now on comparatively open ground, where the regulars could see them and get at them, and under St. Clair's own leadership the troops rushed fiercely at the savages with fixed bayonets and drove them back to cover. By this time the confusion and disorder were great, while from every hollow and grass patch, from behind every stump and tree and fallen log the Indians continued their fire. Again and again the officers led forward the troops in bayonet charges, and at first the men followed them with a will. Each charge seemed for a moment to be successful, the Indians rising in swarms and running in headlong flight from the bayonets. In one of the earliest, in which Colonel Darke led his battalion, the Indians were driven several hundred yards, across the branch of the Wabash; but when the colonel halted and rallied his men he found that the

savages had closed in behind him, and he had to fight his way back, while the foe he had been driving at once turned and harrassed his rear. He was himself wounded and lost most of his command. On reentering camp he found the Indians again in possession of the artillery and baggage, from which they were again driven; they had already scalped the slain who lay about the guns. Maj. Thomas Butler had his thigh broken by a bullet, but he continued on horseback in command of his battalion until the end of the fight, and led his men in one of the momentarily successful bayonet charges. The only regular regiment present lost every officer killed or wounded. The commander of the Kentucky militia, Colonel Oldham, was killed early in the action, while trying to rally his men and damning them for cowards.

The charging troops could accomplish nothing permanent. The men were too clumsy and ill-trained in forest warfare to overtake their fleet, half-naked antagonists. The latter never received the shock; but though they fled they were nothing daunted, for they turned the instant the battalion did and followed firing. They skipped out of reach of the bayonets and came back as they pleased, and they were only visible when raised by a charge. * * *

As the officers fell the soldiers, who at first stood up bravely enough, gradually grew disheartened. No words can paint the hopelessness and horror of such a struggle as that in which they were engaged. They were hemmed in by foes who showed no mercy and whose blows they could in no way return. If they charged they could not overtake the Indians, and the instant the charge stopped the Indians came back. If they stood they were shot down by an unseen enemy; and there was no stronghold, no refuge, to which to flee.

The Indian attack was relentless and could neither be avoided, parried, nor met by counter assault. For two hours or so the troops kept up a slowly lessening resistance, but by degrees their hearts failed. The wounded had been brought toward the middle of the lines, where the baggage and tents were, and an ever-growing proportion of unwounded men joined them. In vain the officers tried by encouragement, by jeers, by blows, to drive them back to the fight. They were unnerved. * * *

There was but one thing to do. If possible the remnant of the army must be saved, and it could only be saved by instant flight, even at the cost of abandoning the wounded. The broad road by which the army had advanced was the only line of retreat. The artillery had already been spiked and abandoned. Most of the horses had been killed, but a few were still left, and on one of these St. Clair mounted. He gathered together those fragments of the different battalions which contained the few men who still kept heart and head and ordered them to charge and regain the road from which the savages had cut them off. Repeated orders were necessary before some of the men could be roused from their stupor sufficiently to follow the charging party, and they were only induced to move when told that it was to retreat.

Colonel Darke and a few officers placed themselves at the head of the column, the coolest and boldest men drew up behind them, and they fell on the Indians with such fury as to force them back well beyond the road. This made an opening through which * * * the troops "pressed like a drove of bullocks." The Indians were surprised by the vigor of the charge and puzzled as to its object. They opened out on both sides and half the men had gone through before they fired more than a chance shot or two. They then fell on the rear and began a hot pursuit. St. Clair sent his aid, Denny, to the front to try to keep order, but neither he nor anyone else could check the flight. Major Clark tried to rally his battalion to cover the retreat, but he was killed and the effort abandoned. * * *

Six hundred and thirty men had been killed and over 280 wounded; less than 500, only about a third of the whole number engaged in battle, remained unhurt. But one or two were taken prisoners, for the Indians butchered everybody, wounded or unwounded, who fell into their hands. * * *

In the following January, Wilkinson, with 150 mounted volunteers, marched to the battlefield to bury the slain. The weather was bitterly cold, snow lay deep on the ground, and some of the volunteers were frost-bitten. Four miles from the scene of battle, where the pursuit had ended, they began to find the bodies on the road and close alongside in the woods, whither some of the hunted creatures had turned at the last to snatch one more moment of life. Many had been dragged from under the snow and devoured by wolves. The others lay where they had fallen, showing as mounds through the smooth, white mantle that covered them. On the battlefield itself the slain lay thick, scalped, and stripped of all their clothing which the conquerors deemed worth taking. The bodies, blackened by frost and exposure, could not be identified, and they were buried in a shallow trench in the frozen ground. The volunteers then marched home.